



King's Research Portal

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Mitton, K. (2018). *Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project: Sierra Leone Case Study: Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project*. UK Stabilisation Unit.

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Stabilisation Unit

Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project: Sierra Leone Case Study

Kieran Mitton

**Stabilisation Unit
February 2018**

This report has been produced by an independent expert. The views contained within do not necessarily reflect UK government policy.



Author details

The author is Senior Lecturer in International Relations, Department of War Studies, King's College London.

Background to Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project

This case study is one of a series commissioned to support the Stabilisation Unit's (SU's) development of an evidence base relating to elite bargains and political deals. The project explores how national and international interventions have and have not been effective in fostering and sustaining political deals and elite bargains; and whether or not these political deals and elite bargains have helped reduce violence, increased local, regional and national stability and contributed to the strengthening of the relevant political settlement. Drawing on the case studies, the SU has developed a series of summary papers that bring together the project's key findings and will underpin the revision of the existing 'UK Approach to Stabilisation' (2014) paper. The project also contributes to the SU's growing engagement and expertise in this area and provides a comprehensive analytical resource for those inside and outside government.



Executive Summary

Sierra Leone experienced a brutal, internal conflict from 1991-2002, in which regional actors played a critical role. A lasting political settlement was reached through a combination of decisive military power applied against the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), parallel diplomatic overtures to moderate elements in the group's leadership, and a concerted international and regional effort to diminish the influence of Charles Taylor, a rebel leader in neighbouring Liberia.

The fact that the country has enjoyed stable peace since 2002 suggests that lessons can and should be learned from this experience, and this report identifies the central elements that led to the successful transition from war to peace in Sierra Leone.

The build-up to an end to conflict

Successful negotiations and sustainable peace were only possible in Sierra Leone once physical security and trust had been assured on the ground. Multiple peace deals were derailed by continued fighting between rebel RUF and pro-government forces, mutual distrust, and the failure of international peacekeepers to adequately protect disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) sites. Following its intervention, the UK played an important role as a guarantor of security, trusted by all sides.

The application of decisive military force was effective in forcing spoiler elements to the negotiating table, and convincing rank-and-file that DDR was a preferable option to continued fighting. Without the 'stick' of military intervention, the 'carrot' of political settlement would have held less appeal to a hard-core element of rebel leaders, and security on the ground could not have been achieved.

Military force alone, however, was not sufficient to provide lasting peace. A concurrent political process, including negotiations with warring factions that identified compliant elements within RUF leadership and provided reassurances about post-conflict security, was essential to convincing the mass ranks to finally lay down arms.

In addition to military force and simultaneous diplomatic outreach, targeted economic and political sanctions proved effective in curtailing the ability of the RUF to sustain itself through 'blood diamond' trade with its sponsor, Charles Taylor. This, in turn, diminished the capacity and will of the RUF to continue fighting.

An important, although often overlooked, factor that encouraged peace was war exhaustion. After eleven years of conflict, combatants on all sides were tired of fighting and sought peace. Rank-and-file RUF combatants experienced particularly difficult conditions by the end of the conflict and, facing military reversals and food-shortages, the offer of peace and DDR held appeal. The establishment of security and trust by the UN and UK provided conditions for successful DDR, but for many war exhaustion provided the motive. War-weariness continues to underpin post-conflict commitments to peace.

External actors

The Sierra Leone case study highlights that the conflict was, in many respects, a regional issue, and therefore the success of any resolution and stabilisation effort required a regional approach. Only through the combined military, diplomatic, economic and legal pressure applied on Charles Taylor's Liberia was the logistical and political support that sustained the RUF effectively cut-off; and only when conflict ended in Liberia in 2003 were the sources of re-recruitment for Sierra Leone's ex-combatants removed.



Stabilisation Unit

The UK was arguably the most important international actor in bringing a political settlement in the latter stages of the conflict. Although the UK had provided backing to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and UN deployments, the expansion of its initial evacuation mission in 2000 into a sustained military campaign against the RUF saw it become the lead actor. Building on the historical ties between Britain and Sierra Leone, the British deployment proved broadly popular with Sierra Leoneans and allowed the UK to effectively provide training and support to the national army and civil defence forces. The UK has remained the most significant post-conflict international donor and partner to the Sierra Leonean government.

The durability of an elite bargain: towards progressive peace?

The Sierra Leone conflict is a highly instructive case study for peace settlement and stabilisation efforts. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding interventions involved local, regional and international actors as well as the use of military, diplomatic and economic measures. It is therefore widely regarded as a post-conflict 'success story'. The country has not returned to war and has witnessed a steady consolidation of security. Successive elections, while not entirely violence free, have seen the peaceful transfer of power between parties, and the most conservative assessments of the country's prospects do not see Sierra Leone at risk of a return to large-scale violence.

The factors that underpin this stability cannot easily be attributed to peacebuilding interventions: transitional justice mechanisms and the DDR programme, for example, have been heavily criticised for their failures. However, it is clear that the security provided by UN and British interventions in the immediate post-conflict period, the regional security provided by international and regional efforts to end conflict in neighbouring Liberia, and the shared determination of Sierra Leoneans – including ex-combatants – to avoid further conflict, are critical elements of this success story.



Background to the Sierra Leone Conflict

The conflict in Sierra Leone raged from 1991 to 2002, and was one of the most brutally violent conflicts of the post-Cold War era. It is estimated that up to 75,000 people were killed and over two million displaced during the course of the war. The rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) became notorious for its trade in diamonds and use of child soldiers, who were typically abducted into rebel ranks and habituated to drug-use. The conflict involved relatively few instances of direct confrontation between armed groups, with the brunt of fatalities and abuses inflicted on the civilian population. Sexual violence, rape, torture, amputations and mutilation were regularly committed by RUF combatants, as well as by government military forces and civilian defence militias.

A notable feature of the conflict was that it did not involve pronounced ethnic or religious divides, nor did the main actors appear driven by coherent political ideologies. Rather, economic agendas and trade in alluvial diamonds strongly shaped the behaviour of rebel leaders and various military factions. The lines between supposedly opposing sides were frequently blurred, such that civilians coined the term 'sobel' to describe the dual 'soldier-rebel' identity of belligerents. After several failed peace accords and stalled disarmament programmes, the conflict in Sierra Leone ultimately came to an end in 2002, an outcome that followed robust military intervention by British, UN and regional forces.

Main Drivers of Conflict

The long-term, structural drivers of conflict in Sierra Leone centred around political grievances fomented by decades of misrule under successive All People's Congress (APC) regimes. These grievances were most pronounced in the rural southeast of the country, where conflict began in 1991, and built on decades of neglect. From independence in 1961, Sierra Leone's political leadership became increasingly repressive and, by the 1980s, Sierra Leone was effectively a one-party state. Protests by student movements were routinely quelled through violent police action. Compounding this situation were economic recession and food-shortages in rural areas in the 1980s and early 1990s. With profits from state resources channelled into the pockets of the ruling coastal elite, the rural south-eastern areas, traditionally strong-holds of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), remained neglected and under-developed. Immediately prior to the outbreak of war, these areas were severely hit by food-shortages and high unemployment.

A more proximate cause of conflict related to the role played by the traditional chieftaincy structures within the country, a system of patrimonial rule that helped to foment discontent among rural youth. Established by a colonial strategy of governance in which chiefs acted as local channels for state power and distribution (and extraction) of resources, chieftaincy positions were inherited by a limited number of ruling families. Chiefs maintained power and the loyalty of their communities by dispensing justice in their respective communities and controlling land tenure, labour and marital rights. Those failing to comply with the wishes of chiefs were typically subject to fines. By the eve of conflict in Sierra Leone, chiefs and their affiliated elites had been predominantly co-opted by the APC one-party state, and their control of patronage – jobs, land and marriage – was seen as highly arbitrary and exclusionary. Under the strain of economic recession, their monopoly made them deeply unpopular with youths unable to find work, access land or finance marriage.¹ Thus numerous youths with limited opportunities for social mobility were sympathetic to the political message of the RUF and sought a radical change of government.

¹ R. Fanthorp, (2005) 'On the limits of liberal peace: Chiefs and democratic decentralization in post war Sierra Leone', *African Affairs*, 105(418):27-49; Richards, P. (1996) *Fighting for the Rainforest- War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey).



The immediate trigger of conflict in Sierra Leone was the conflict in neighbouring Liberia, where Charles Taylor, leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebels, provided combatants and support for the March 1991 invasion. Taylor's motivation in drawing Sierra Leone into conflict, which remained one of the key drivers of conflict throughout 1991-2002, related to a number of aims. First, bringing war to Sierra Leone opened up a new front against the Nigerian forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), who had intervened in Liberia against the NPFL with support of the Sierra Leonean President Joseph Momoh. Second, Taylor sought to benefit from natural resources in Sierra Leone – in particular diamonds – to fund his campaign. Third, Taylor sought to establish long-term influence regionally, beyond the borders of Liberia.

The Political Economy and the 'Shadow State'

When conflict began in March 1991, Sierra Leone was effectively a 'shadow-state' comprised of formal institutions that were, in effect, shells. Political power and distribution of economic wealth were channelled along informal personal connections, with rural inland chiefs co-opted through the dispensation of patronage. With recession in the 1980s, this system became a source of frustration for young rural youths who saw dwindling resources monopolised by a small elite, while unemployment rose and the education system collapsed. By 1991, many were involved in illicit alluvial diamond mining as a source of income.²

The political economy of conflict in neighbouring Liberia had also made itself felt in the months prior to March 1991. Combatants from the NPFL regularly crossed the border in the east to trade looted items, often with soldiers of the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) garrisoned nearby. On at least two occasions, NPFL fighters also looted villages within Sierra Leone, close to the Liberian border.³

Main Actors and Motives

The war began when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a Liberian-backed rebel movement, invaded Sierra Leone in March 1991. Led by Foday Sankoh, a former army corporal and wedding photographer, the RUF appealed to young rural youth with the promise of political change and redistribution of wealth. The group quickly lost popular support, however, due to looting of villages and regular violent abuse perpetrated against civilians. As the conflict evolved, the RUF lost much of its early senior political leadership, and was judged to have become heavily – if not exclusively – motivated by profiteering from looting and diamond mining.⁴

The Sierra Leone Army (SLA) was the formal state military responsible for repelling the RUF threat. Under-resourced and under-paid, it was both unable to defeat the RUF in the early years of the war and guilty itself of looting and committing abuses against civilians. Frustrated by a perceived lack of government support and investment in the army, a group of junior officers led a coup in 1992, establishing themselves as the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). The NPRC eventually handed over power to a civilian government in 1996. However, in 1997 another faction of the army seized power, angered by government favouring of civil militias over the national army. Calling themselves the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), they briefly shared power with the RUF before being ousted by Nigerian-led peacekeepers and local defence militias. Following the Lome Peace Agreement of 1999, the AFRC became a less significant actor. In 2000, a splinter group known

² P. Richards, (1996) *Fighting for the Rainforest- War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey); D. Keen (2005) *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey)

³ Kieran Mitton, (2015a) *Rebels in a Rotten State: Understanding Atrocity in Sierra Leone* (London: Hurst/Oxford University Press).

⁴ Lansana Gberie, (2005) *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone* (London: C. Hurst & Co.); Keen 2005



Stabilisation Unit

as the West Side Boys (WSB) captured eleven British soldiers, leading to the expansion of the UK's military role in Sierra Leone.

The Civil Defence Force (CDF) was the third major Sierra Leonean force in the war. The CDF was initially established as a local defence mechanism in local communities as a response to abuses by both rebel and government troops. Drawing on traditional 'Kamajor' hunters and secret societies, the CDF was rooted within rural communities and acted to prevent RUF attacks and instances of looting by state-forces. From the outset, the CDF experienced major tensions with the national army. In part, this reflected conflict over alleged army abuses in villages the CDF had been established to protect. However, it also reflected deep distrust between the military, seen as more closely linked to coastal elites and the old APC regime, and the SLPP heartlands of the south and east. Upon election in 1996, SLPP President Tejan Kabbah substantially bolstered the CDF, further exacerbating tensions. Many SLA officers and rank-and-file complained of being side-lined by the government, with its rightful role being usurped by a civil militia sympathetic to the ruling SLPP.⁵

From this mid-point of the conflict, the CDF operated as an extension of the state and proved effective against the RUF. Enjoying local support in many communities of the south and east, and with a superior knowledge of hunting bush-paths and morale-boosting traditional 'magic', it presented the RUF with an enemy capable of fighting irregular warfare and difficult to distinguish from the civilian population. However, following a major increase in CDF recruitment and deployment, discipline and command and control within the group suffered. The CDF was regularly implicated in abuses against civilians and suspected rebel-sympathisers, leading to the indictment of their leadership by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

In addition to these forces within the country, Charles Taylor, the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel forces, played a key role in the conflict. He under-took guerrilla and revolutionary warfare training with the nascent RUF leadership, including RUF leader Foday Sankoh, in Libya in the 1980s, and recruited key RUF figures – such as Sam Bockarie – for his own campaign in Liberia in 1989, on the promise that if they provided him support he would subsequently provide backing to their own cause in Sierra Leone. He fulfilled this promise in 1991, providing the majority of fighters for the first RUF invasion, launched from Liberia.

Throughout the conflict Taylor provided political and economic support to the RUF, trading arms for diamonds and offering refuge to RUF fighters within Liberia. Beyond Taylor's economic interests in Sierra Leone, he sought to establish regional hegemony through the war and to tie-up ECOMOG forces in the neighbouring country, undermining Nigeria's capacity and willingness to prosecute its mission against Taylor within Liberia. Nigeria, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire were all drawn into the Sierra Leone conflict – sometimes referred to as being part of a regional 'Mano River War' – through their struggle with Taylor. He also offered refuge to RUF commanders in the latter stages of Sierra Leone's war, most notably Sam Bockarie who travelled to Cote d'Ivoire to fight against Ivorian state forces at Taylor's behest. Removing Charles Taylor's support for the RUF and his influence on the West African region became a central pillar of US and UK strategy in the early 2000s, an aim achieved by 2003 through a combination of sanctions, indictment by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and the backing of anti-Taylor insurgents.

Regional and international intervention

In 1990, ECOWAS formed the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a peacekeeping force composed primarily of Nigerian troops, to intervene in the war in

⁵ Keen, 2005.



Stabilisation Unit

neighbouring Liberia. Increasingly, however, Nigeria saw the conflict in Sierra Leone as linked to that of Liberia and regional insecurity, with Charles Taylor the key spoiler of peace in the region, and in 1997 ECOMOG also intervened in Sierra Leone. As one of the few international actors to intervene in the conflict, Nigeria bore the brunt of human and resource costs. Generally feared by the RUF for their superior training and weaponry (as compared to the SLA), ECOMOG was also riddled with problems of low troop morale and inconsistent command and control. Troops were also implicated in abuses against RUF captives and local communities. While they were seen as heroes by some communities in Sierra Leone, looting and black-market trade by ECOMOG soldiers also led to the popular coining of the phrase 'ECOMOG – Every Car or Movable Object Gone.' Given these problems, and the domestic political costs in Nigeria of heavy casualties in a prolonged deployment, Nigeria was concerned to find a political settlement and involve other international partners, allowing it to draw-down its presence.

In 1998, ECOMOG was forced to intervene to restore the civilian government of President Tejan Kabbah, providing backing to CDF forces in the expulsion of the AFRC and RUF from Freetown. Coastal shelling by ECOMOG caused significant damage to civilians as well as to AFRC-RUF targets. Criticism over 'collateral damage' was compounded when ECOMOG failed to prevent the return of AFRC-RUF fighters to the city in January 1999, taking weeks to eventually repel the invasion and carrying out arbitrary execution of suspected rebels.

It remains unclear why ECOMOG failed to effectively prevent the 1999 attack, despite evidence that intelligence forewarned the invasion. Allegations that ECOMOG allowed the attack to unfold as a means to force the international community and Sierra Leone government to accept a speedy political negotiation have not been substantiated, and given the heavy losses to Nigerian troops, must be treated with caution. A plausible alternative explanation is that leadership in ECOMOG was fragmented with poor lines of communication, leading to the disregarding of critical intelligence. Following January 1999, ECOMOG remained a key player in combating the RUF but was able to gradually decrease its role, particularly following the deployment of UN troops in 2000.

This deployment of 6000 troops, under the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), was mandated to oversee a DDR process agreed under the Lone Accord. Initially under-staffed and with an inconsistent level of discipline and effectiveness across troop contingents, the force was seen as incapable of providing the security required for DDR.⁶ Indeed, in 2000, hundreds of its peacekeepers were kidnapped by the RUF. UNAMSIL was eventually bolstered to 17,500 personnel and played an important role in holding territory and protecting DDR sites once they had been secured by combined British, CDF and SLA operations.

In addition, the United Kingdom deployed troops to the country in May 2000. Their presence, in particular through the training they provided to CDF and SLA forces, and the political pressure they exerted on Charles Taylor along with the US to cease support for the RUF, was a contributing factor in ending the conflict. The UK initially deployed under Operation Palliser for the purposes of evacuation, aiming to secure Lungi airport to facilitate the transport of British and international staff as another RUF invasion of Freetown loomed. However, British forces were engaged by a contingent of RUF fighters in the town of Lungi Loi and, after quickly defeating them, it was decided that only decisive force applied against the RUF would lead the rebels to disarm. The mission was therefore expanded to include the training of the SLA to prepare it for confrontation with the RUF. In July 2000, British forces also provided support to the rescue of UNAMSIL hostages taken by the RUF in Kailahun, including the deployment of special forces. This rescue – Operation Kukhri – was successful in both achieving its military aims and in demoralising RUF forces, underlining a more

⁶ Keen, 2005.



robust international presence in the conflict. This was followed in September 2000 by another UK rescue mission, Operation Barras, when British soldiers were abducted by the West Side Boys faction (WSB). The successful operation against the WSB, along with shows of strength through fly-overs of British jets and the visibility of its naval power, convinced many RUF rank-and-file as well as moderate commanders that the war was over.

Evolution of the Conflict

The conflict can be divided into four broad stages. The first (1991-1993) saw the RUF conduct a conventional insurgency with heavy backing from Liberian NPFL forces. Holding territory in the south and east, the group failed to build popular support and increasingly relied on abductions for recruitment. The military coup of the NPRC in 1992 did not see a substantial improvement in the army's response to the RUF, and by 1993 many rural villages had begun to organise informal self-defence militias.

The second phase (1994-1995) saw a more proactive military response. Combined with the growth of the militias (formalised as CDF), this led the RUF to become a bush-based guerrilla movement. By 1995 the NPRC was increasingly accused of complicity in looting and illicit diamond mining, and under sustained civil-society and international pressure, agreed to hold democratic elections. Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, the candidate of the SLPP, won elections in 1996 marred by RUF atrocities against voters and insecurity across much of the country.

The third phase (1996-1998) saw a major ramping-up of CDF numbers and military activity against the RUF. A private security firm – Executive Outcomes – was contracted to secure key mining sites and quickly overran the RUF, destroying its headquarters in late 1996. The reversal pushed the RUF to the negotiating table and resulted in the 1996 Abidjan Peace Accord. A central condition of the RUF was the withdrawal of Executive Outcomes. However, within months the accord unravelled as fighting continued and the RUF was accused of seeking to continue to profit from the war economy. Elements of the SLA also increasingly clashed with the CDF over control of diamond-rich areas.

In 1997, RUF leader Foday Sankoh was arrested in Nigeria on weapons charges. Sankoh's deputy, Sam Bockerie, took control of the group which had become increasingly factionalised and marked by the personal agendas of competing commanders. Elements within the SLA, hostile to the CDF, seized power in May 1997. Calling themselves the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), they invited the RUF to join them in power and officially disbanded the CDF. The coup was met with international and regional condemnation. Nigeria deployed ECOMOG troops to restore the civilian government and together with the CDF, expelled the AFRC/RUF from the capital in 1998.

In the fourth phase (1999-2002), the AFRC/RUF conducted a brutal attack on Freetown in January 1999 that led the government, under considerable regional pressure, to seek peace with the RUF.⁷ This led to the signing of the Lome Peace Agreement in July 1999, providing amnesty for the RUF and power-sharing with the newly released Foday Sankoh. A UN peacekeeping force, UNAMSIL, was also deployed to oversee DDR. Once again, the peace quickly unravelled with RUF and CDF forces clashing, particularly in diamond mining areas from which rebel forces were reluctant to withdraw. The UN force was unable to exert influence, with troop contingents widely judged to be poorly equipped and unwilling to tackle recalcitrant rebel forces.⁸ In May 2000, the RUF captured 500 UN peacekeepers in the northern town of Makeni. Public protests outside Foday Sankoh's residence led to the shooting of protesters by Sankoh's bodyguards. Sankoh fled but was subsequently captured

⁷ Keen, 2005; Krijn Peters, (2011) *War and the Crisis of Youth in Sierra Leone* (Cambridge University Press).

⁸ Keen, 2005



Stabilisation Unit

and imprisoned. At the same time, amidst worsening security, the UK had deployed forces to secure the Lungi international airport and evacuate British and other foreign nationals.

Under pressure from Nigeria and the international community, Liberian president Charles Taylor successfully exerted influence on the RUF to release the captured peacekeepers in June 2000. However, Taylor was viewed by Nigeria, the UK and US as seeking to further destabilise Sierra Leone, using the RUF as a proxy for regional competition with Guinea, and to profit from the diamond trade. The international community increasingly applied political pressure on Taylor to cease material support for the RUF, highlighting the role that diamonds were playing in the conflict.

A key turning point came in August 2000, when eleven British soldiers were captured by a splinter-faction of the AFRC known as the West Side Boys (WSB). The British response saw the deployment of special forces to route the group, signalling a more robust British role in the war and leading to higher numbers of RUF combatants demobilising from their ranks. In early 2001, following an RUF attack in Guinean territory, Guinea also entered the conflict, proving devastatingly effective in its use of helicopter gunships against the rebels. With Taylor facing military reversals in Liberia and international pressure to step-down, CDF forces effectively sealed-off the border between Liberia and Sierra Leone, denying the RUF the ability to retreat into Liberian territory.

By early 2002, the RUF was an all but defeated military force. The newly appointed interim leader of the group, Issa Sesay, was seen as a more moderate figure inclined to bring remaining fighters to demobilise. With political pressure applied on Sesay, and Sankoh and other senior leaders now under threat of prosecution by the newly established Special Court for Sierra Leone, the RUF recommitted to DDR and the war was formally declared over in January 2002.

Main Stabilisation and Political Settlement Approaches

There were three major approaches to promoting a political deal in Sierra Leone. First, there were multiple local, regional and internationally-driven attempts at negotiation and mediation with the RUF to reach a political power-sharing agreement. Second, targeted economic, material and legal sanctions were used against belligerents and peace-spoilers, including Charles Taylor of Liberia. Third, robust military force was used against the RUF and Liberian counter-parts by local, regional and international forces, to force the group into a political settlement.

Peace Negotiations and Ceasefires

Successive attempts to broker cease-fires leading to peace agreements were made throughout the conflict. Initially these attempts were spearheaded by civil-society groups and regional power Nigeria through the aegis of ECOWAS. Among civil society groups, a number of women's organisations – under the umbrella of the Women's Forum – played a particularly crucial role in campaigning for a return to democratic rule and renewed peace negotiations following the NPRC coup in 1992. Members of the Women's Forum applied pressure to the government through the organisation of public rallies, press conferences and meetings with members of the international community. As non-partisan organisations, they held broad support in Sierra Leone and proved highly effective in pushing the NPRC regime to hold elections in 1996. The NPRC had wanted 'peace before elections', but at a National Consultative Conference in 1995, the Women's Forum successfully pressured the military leadership into accepting popular demands for elections first.

Following the Abidjan peace agreement, women's groups were increasingly side-lined. The Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL), however, took on greater significance. Formed of Christian and Muslim leaders, IRCSL enjoyed a degree of legitimacy with all actors in the conflict and was successful in securing meetings with RUF leader Foday Sankoh following the January 1999 attack on



Freetown. It was through the negotiations between Sankoh and President Kabbah, facilitated by the IRCSL, that the Lome Peace Accord was eventually signed. Although granted a place at the negotiating table, the IRCSL was eventually marginalised in the process as armed conflict between the CDF, SLA and RUF continued, and international military intervention became more significant. Ultimately, despite the successes of civil society in instigating negotiations and campaigning for democracy, it became clear that the RUF's willingness to commit to peace was predominantly shaped by the battlefield and the ambitions of leaders Foday Sankoh and Charles Taylor.

During Sierra Leonean and internationally-backed negotiations, an offer to the RUF was the promise of power-sharing, with RUF leader Foday Sankoh to be appointed as Vice-President and several commanders given ministerial office. Inducements also included amnesty for the RUF leadership from criminal prosecution – with the caveat that this did not apply to 'International war crimes' – and support for the transformation of the RUF into a political party. DDR, overseen by UN peacekeepers, was also an element in each attempted peace deal, with the offer of skills training and educational-enrolment aimed at convincing rank-and-file RUF members that spoils of peace outweighed those of war.

The most significant negotiation followed the RUF/AFRC attack on Freetown in January 1999. With channels of communication to the RUF opened by the IRCSL, international actors, most notably Nigeria, encouraged President Kabbah to seek peace. The RUF signed the Lome Agreement in July 1999, which provided for power-sharing, amnesty and a DDR programme. Foday Sankoh was released from prison in Nigeria as part of the deal and, as outlined above, a UN peacekeeping force was deployed to oversee the DDR programme. However, the accord quickly unravelled following fighting between RUF and CDF forces across the country, and the inability of UNAMSIL to secure disarmament and demobilisation sites.

Creating the 'ripeness' for a deal

Diplomatic negotiations switched focus in 2000 after the RUF kidnapped UNAMSIL peacekeepers. Greater political pressure was applied to Charles Taylor by the US, UK and Nigeria, to secure release of the hostages, cease support for the RUF war effort, and to encourage the RUF to return to the peace agreement. The UN, through UNAMSIL, pursued a more conciliatory position in favour of political settlement with the RUF, whilst the UK and Sierra Leonean government put greater emphasis on robust military action. These different approaches effectively amounted to a 'carrot and stick' strategy by which the RUF were pushed towards negotiation for disarmament to avoid further military setbacks at the hands of the SLA, British and Guinean forces.

With the re-arrest of Foday Sankoh, the RUF leadership was increasingly fragmented. Reluctant to seek peace or go through DDR, Sam Bockarie had become isolated within the RUF and had left to join Taylor in Liberia at the end of 1999. As the rebels suffered major military setbacks, Issa Sesay was favoured by the international community for his perceived willingness to return the RUF to DDR.⁹ Within the RUF, Sesay split opinion: it was widely held that while rank-and-file supported Sesay due to his pro-disarmament stance, senior RUF leadership, who were mostly in prison in Freetown, as well as Charles Taylor, had allegedly advised Sesay not to disarm, believing that to do so would weaken the RUF's negotiating position and ultimately lead to Sesay's own arrest. With few other senior RUF leaders available, and with substantial support from RUF rank-and-file, Sesay was appointed RUF interim leader in August 2000. According to Sesay, he was effectively appointed to the position by West African leaders on condition that he pursued disarmament, and had the confidence to do so following assurances from UNAMISIL force commander Daniel Opande that he would be protected from arrest. Sesay followed through on his promises, and from 2001 until 2002

⁹ Keen, 2005: 273



the RUF effectively demobilised. Sesay was subsequently indicted, tried and convicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for war crimes.

Targeted Economic and Legal Sanctions

Throughout the conflict, but particularly toward the latter-stages, economic sanctions and the legal indictment of senior leadership in both Sierra Leone and Liberia, was used to encourage the RUF to seek a political settlement. The most significant of these measures targeted the arms and diamond trade between Taylor's regime and the RUF. From 1999, there was increased focus on 'blood diamonds' and the US and UK began to look at cutting-off funding sources to Taylor's regime. In December 2000, a UN panel of experts identified the diamond and arms trade as central to sustaining conflict in Sierra Leone. In March 2001, the UN imposed an arms embargo on Liberia and banned the country from trading in rough diamonds. Travel bans were also imposed on senior Liberian officials and associates of Charles Taylor. At the same time, the UN and international NGOs applied pressure on the world's major diamond trading companies to cease trade in 'blood diamonds' sourced from conflict-affected states. The growing public spotlight on international firms contributed to increased oversight and regulation of the trade, reinforcing the effectiveness of the ban.

The effect of the diamond embargo was immediate: the UN reported a substantial decrease in illicit trafficking of diamonds into Liberia whilst legitimate diamond sales from within Sierra Leone increased. However, the decrease in trafficking in diamonds was also partly attributable to the interruption of trafficking routes by British and Guinean military deployment in Sierra Leone and Liberia respectively, as well as the operation of anti-Taylor militia backed by Guinea along the border with Sierra Leone. Though poorly substantiated, reports in late 2001 – following terror attacks in the US in September – of links between Taylor's trade in diamonds and the funding of terrorist groups, may also have discouraged illicit trade amidst increased US action against terrorist-funding.

Ultimately, with a decline in diamond and arms trafficking, and Taylor increasingly under military threat within Monrovia, Liberia's influence on the RUF and Sierra Leone conflict receded. As Taylor lost grip on power in 2003, the Special Court for Sierra Leone unsealed its indictment against the leader for war crimes. This move played a role in pushing Taylor to negotiate his withdrawal from power, via Nigeria, completing the combined efforts to remove him as a regional spoiler.

Military Intervention

The most significant military interventions in Sierra Leone's war came in the latter stages of the conflict, beginning in 1998 with the deployment of ECOMOG soldiers to restore the civilian government of President Kabbah. With the support of CDF forces, ECOMOG pushed the RUF/AFRC junta from the capital, but was unable to prevent the brutal reprisal attack on the city in January 1999. Following the signing of the Lome Accord, the role of ECOMOG decreased in favour of the UNAMSIL deployment. The UN peacekeeping force was initially unable to restrain the RUF from continued violence, and struggled to protect its own peacekeepers. In 2000, the capture of 500 UNAMSIL troops by the RUF led to calls for a much larger force, which was ultimately boosted to 17,500 – the largest UN peacekeeping force at that time.

Two particularly decisive military interventions that swayed the balance of the war in favour of the Sierra Leonean government also came in 2000. First, the UK deployed forces in what was initially an evacuation mission. However, following continued RUF violence and the abduction of British soldiers by the West Side Boys (WSB) in August 2000, the mission became more robust, with direct engagement against WSB and a concerted effort to train and support the Sierra Leone army and CDF. The UK forces effectively wiped out the WSB contingent and signalled to many RUF rank-and-file that



the tide had turned decisively against the RUF.¹⁰ Through its training and equipping of the SLA, as part of its broader Security Sector Reform programme, the UK also significantly boosted morale in the Sierra Leonean army. Experiencing improved pay and welfare, the retrained SLA also worked as an effective inducement for RUF rank-and-file to seek DDR. With many rebels experiencing war weariness and food shortages in jungle bases, news of soldiers returning to their families with food and new uniforms stood in stark contrast to their own conditions.¹¹

The second intervention followed an RUF attack into Guinean territory in late 2000. In response, Guinea deployed helicopter gunships in support of local defence forces, who made rapid gains in the north of the country. Under pressure from this counter-offensive, many within the RUF were concerned at near defeat and sought DDR with UN protection as preferable to surrendering to CDF forces.¹²

Success and Failures: the lack of ‘stickiness’ within peace agreements

Successive peace agreements and DDR programmes failed to stick for two key reasons. First, the RUF commitment to peace deals, most notably the Abidjan Accord in 1996, appeared to serve short-term strategic goals rather than a genuine commitment to peace. In 1996, the RUF insisted on the removal of the private military firm that had tipped the military balance in favour of the government. It is widely believed that the group sought to regroup and rearm following these setbacks, using the deal to buy-time.¹³ The preoccupation of the RUF leadership with profiting from diamond resources also led many to conclude that the continuation of war at all costs remained the goal of spoiler elements in the rebel leadership.¹⁴

Second, and related to the first, cease-fires and local security were inconsistent during and following negotiations, such that mutual distrust between CDF and RUF fighters meant both sides were reluctant to disarm. An enduring conviction permeated the RUF from senior to lower levels that the government sought to eradicate the group through the CDF.¹⁵ Breaches of the ceasefire by CDF forces compounded this problem of trust.

The most effective means by which a lasting political settlement was reached in Sierra Leone was a combination of decisive military power applied against the RUF, in combination with parallel diplomatic overtures to moderate elements in the group’s leadership and a concerted international and regional effort to diminish Charles Taylor’s influence.

Whilst UNAMSIL deployments had initially proven insufficient to tackle the RUF, a more robust and coordinated response led by the UK in support of the CDF and SLA proved highly effective. Beyond military and territorial gains, a key impact was on the psychology and commitment of the RUF’s rank-and-file.¹⁶ Following low fly-overs of RUF territory by British jets, and having learned of the defeat of the West Side Boys by British special forces, many RUF fighters and commanders believed their group was in imminent danger of defeat. Greater trust in British forces than in government troops and the

¹⁰ Keen, 2005; Kieran Mitton, (2013) ‘Where is the War? Explaining Peace in Sierra Leone’, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 30, Issue 3.

¹¹ Keen, 2005

¹² Keen, 2005; Mitton, 2013; David H. Ucko, (2016) ‘Can Limited Intervention Work? Lessons from Britain’s Success Story in Sierra Leone’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 39, Issue 1.

¹³ Keen, 2005

¹⁴ Gberie, 2005.

¹⁵ Peters, 2011

¹⁶ Ucko, 2016; Mitton, 2013



CDF, as well as a bolstered peacekeeping force, also played an important role in convincing RUF fighters that DDR sites were safe.¹⁷

The political efforts that supported military operations involved sanctions and pressure applied to Charles Taylor's regime. The international community was also successful in forcing Taylor to withdraw material support from the RUF, and sanctions on arms trade and diamonds further weakened Taylor's fragile regime. Political negotiations with the RUF also saw the international community successful manoeuvre Issa Sesay into a leadership position of the rebel group. Sesay, judged more compliant, subsequently played a key role in convincing the RUF to recommit to DDR. By removing the more hard-line leadership from the equation, this move allowed thousands of rank-and-file RUF combatants to disarm without fear of retribution from their own leadership.¹⁸

Co-ordination and coercion

Within Sierra Leone, civil society played an important role at key moments of the conflict to push warring parties to the negotiating table. A variety of civil society organisations came to prominence in the mid-1990s and effectively coordinated to reflect popular will and apply pressure to the Sierra Leone government and the international community. In 1995, women's movements were particularly important in spear-heading pressure on the NPRC military regime to hold elections and return to civilian rule. The Women's Forum in particular was credited with holding the NPRC to account and ensuring that it was unable to renege on its promises. Subsequently, the Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL) was also instrumental in brokering peace talks between the RUF and the government of President Kabbah, leading to the Lome Peace Agreement of 1999. Sierra Leonean civil society actors were highly effective in communicating grass-roots grievances and popular will to leaders of warring factions and the international community. However, although involved in facilitating negotiations held by regional actors – such as Nigeria – and international partners, they were generally excluded from making meaningful contributions during actual talks.

As the leading regional power of ECOWAS, Nigeria also played a key role throughout the Sierra Leonean conflict. It coordinated regional diplomatic efforts to negotiate peace and facilitated talks between the RUF leadership and the Sierra Leone government prior to and following the Lome Peace Agreement. Other actors active in brokering talks include the UN, the UK, the Commonwealth and OAU. However, ECOWAS remained the focal point-body. Meetings between regional leaders of ECOWAS were held in Guinea and Abidjan to secure the RUF's participation in the peace process. Nigeria, along with the US and UK, also applied diplomatic pressure on Charles Taylor to secure the commitment of the RUF leadership. In addition to the diplomatic efforts of Nigeria, the country also played a major role in sending ground forces to combat the RUF, most notably in 1998 when it removed the RUF/AFRC junta from power.

The UN's role was to act as a neutral peacekeeping force to provide security for, and oversee the delivery of, the DDR programme. UNAMSIL also played a role in negotiating on-the-ground disarmament of individual RUF contingents, as well as providing assurances to Issa Sesay and the RUF leadership over their security during and following demobilisation. The initial UN deployments had been poorly coordinated, under-resourced, and with insufficient troop presence and quality to effectively deploy and guarantee security at DDR sites. Following British intervention in 2000 and a boosted UN mandate, a larger UNAMSIL deployment with UK support proved much more effective. Towards the end of the conflict, criticism was aimed at the apparent lack of coordination between the UN's approach and that of the UK and Sierra Leone government. The UN was regarded as

¹⁷ Keen, 2005

¹⁸ Mitton, 2015a



favouring negotiation and conciliation with the RUF, while the UK and Sierra Leone government were viewed as seeking to force the RUF to disarm through military action. However, in practice the differing approaches proved complimentary as a 'carrot and stick' strategy; RUF forces were reported to have opted for DDR at UN sites in the belief that the alternative was military elimination at the hands of the government.¹⁹

The UK was arguably the most important international actor in bringing a political settlement in the latter stages of the conflict. Although the UK had given backing to ECOWAS and UN deployments, the expansion of its initial evacuation mission in 2000 into a sustained military campaign against the RUF saw it become the lead actor. Building on the historical ties between Britain and Sierra Leone, the British deployment proved broadly popular with Sierra Leoneans and allowed the UK to effectively provide training and support to the national army and civil defence forces. The UK has remained the most significant international donor and partner to the Sierra Leonean government post-conflict.

Post-Conflict

Sierra Leone is widely regarded as post-conflict 'success story'. The country has not returned to war and has witnessed a steady consolidation of security. Successive elections, whilst not entirely violence free, have seen the peaceful transfer of power between SLPP and APC parties. The RUF and CDF quickly faded as organisations and the most conservative assessments of the country's prospects do not see Sierra Leone at risk of a return to large-scale violence. The factors that underpin this stability cannot easily be attributed to peacebuilding interventions: transitional justice mechanisms and the DDR programme, for example, have been heavily criticised for their failures. However, it is clear the security provided by UN and British interventions in the immediate post-conflict period, the regional security provided by international and regional efforts to end conflict in neighbouring Liberia, and the shared determination of Sierra Leoneans – including ex-combatants – to avoid further conflict, are critical elements of this success story. This section briefly provides an overview of some of these elements and their role in Sierra Leone's war-to-peace transition.

Post-War Sierra Leone (2002-2016)

In the years immediately following the declaration of peace in 2002, the security situation in Sierra Leone remained precarious. The DDR programme had raised high expectations and was widely judged by ex-combatants to have failed to deliver. Delivery of assistance was short-term, inconsistent, and fundamentally constrained by the limited availability of employment and educational opportunities in an economy wrecked by war. Vocal in their dissatisfaction with the reintegration programme and unable to find work, former fighters of all factions were a constant concern for the government. With unemployment high among youths and ex-combatants, many reports on the country's situation raised alarms over the prospect of disgruntled former fighters returning to arms.²⁰ In 2002 and 2003, ex-combatants from both RUF and CDF factions were reported to have travelled to neighbouring Liberia and further afield to Cote d'Ivoire, becoming regional mercenaries.

Despite concerns, Sierra Leone's frustrated ex-combatants did not return to arms *en masse*, and the problem of regional mercenaries was quickly resolved with the end of conflict in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire. The vast majority of ex-combatants, even if frustrated, remained committed to peace, in large part due to their bitter experiences of a war that had brought them little personal gain and

¹⁹ Keen, 2005

²⁰ See, for example, International Crisis Group (ICG) (2001), *Sierra Leone: Managing Uncertainty* (Freetown/ Brussels: ICG); and ICG (2003) *Sierra Leone: The State of Security and Governance* (Freetown/ Brussels: ICG).



Stabilisation Unit

many personal losses. Most of the RUF's senior leadership was imprisoned, killed or on trial at the Special Court, with those remaining unable to muster support from their former cadres who had – both through formal DDR and through their own means – abandoned the rebel ranks. In all but name and surviving loose networks, the RUF had ceased to exist within two years of the end of war.

Although DDR was heavily criticised for its failures, reintegration of RUF combatants was nevertheless successful due in large part to the desire of former rank-and-file rebels to return to civilian life and distance themselves from their wartime associations. Likewise, Sierra Leonean communities demonstrated a desire to 'move on' from conflict and did not, in general, seek recriminations against former rebels. Many former RUF combatants did not, in fact, choose to return to their nascent communities, opting instead to remain in the capital Freetown and the larger urban areas of Kenema, Bo and Makeni, reflecting both a perception that there were more economic opportunities in towns, as well as widespread fears about recriminations should they return home. Former CDF combatants proved more inclined to return to their home communities, where in contrast to the RUF, they were generally regarded as defenders and heroes during the conflict.

In 2002 elections, the RUF had been transformed into a political party. Reflecting the absence of its senior leadership and loss of coherence post-war, it failed to win a single seat. By 2007 elections the party was disbanded. The elections of 2007 were nevertheless a major test of the country's stability, and despite instances of street-violence – typically coordinated by political patrons employing ex-combatants and unemployed youths as 'muscle' – the APC was successfully installed in government following a high voter turnout. Ex-combatants were an important political constituency during these elections, and the APC's victory was owed in part to discontent among former fighters over perceived broken promises by Kabbah's SLPP. These promises included the expected 'peace dividend' of jobs and education following the DDR programme. Although there were fears during 2007 elections that the SLPP might remobilise the CDF in case of defeat, no such remobilisation took place, and subsequently the group's networks effectively evaporated.

The pace of development following 2007 elections was slow, and concern over root causes of Sierra Leone's conflict – high unemployment, monopolisation of opportunities and resources by a political elite, and the marginalisation of youth – remained. Nevertheless, the country remained stable and, in 2012, national elections were the most peaceful of the post-war era. Despite suffering a major test of its socio-political, economic and national security during the 2014 Ebola crises, the country was again able to emerge with peace intact, with the widely praised performance of RSLAF forces demonstrating that UK-led security sector reform had achieved solid progress.

Conclusion

There are a number of factors that are key to understanding the successful stabilisation and consolidation of peace in post-conflict Sierra Leone, despite the apparent failure to substantially address many of the grievances seen as instrumental to civil war onset in 1991.

First, an important aspect that ensured peace in the immediate phase during and following DDR, despite ex-combatant grievances, was the continued presence of UN and British troops, as well as the implicit – and sometimes explicit – guarantee of UK intervention in the event of renewed conflict. This provided assurances and security to ex-combatants that peace would not be short-lived, as it had been in previous peace deals, and acted as an effective long-term deterrent to spoiler remnants. Furthermore, a UK-led security sector reform programme overhauled and substantially improved Sierra Leone's armed forces, improving their capabilities and reducing prospects of military interference in national politics. Whilst popular trust in the police force remained low, the improved



discipline and perceived professionalism of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) was a successful element in the consolidation of post-conflict stability.

Second, there was also improved regional security: conflict in Sierra Leone has to be understood in its regional context. Just as the war in 1991 was linked to neighbouring Liberia and Charles Taylor, so too is the post-2002 peace. The initial years following peace in 2002 remained tense and ex-combatants were known to have travelled to Liberia to fight for and against Taylor's forces. However, with the removal of Taylor from power in 2003, Liberia ceased to be a source of employment for ex-combatants or a source of instability in the region. Without a third party such as Taylor providing finance, backing and intermediary mobilisers for war, conflict within Sierra Leone became increasingly difficult. This vital element of Sierra Leone's post-conflict stability is therefore also an indication of success for Liberian, regional, and international efforts to end conflict and consolidate peace in the Mano River region.

Third, there can be little doubt that many of the grievances viewed as 'root causes' of the Sierra Leone civil war remain. Youth unemployment remains very high, access to education, jobs, land and resources continues to be monopolised by political elites at both national and local level, and development has not matched the high-expectations many shared in 2002. Nevertheless, a critical difference is that Sierra Leone enjoys multi-party democracy, as opposed to the one-party APC state that preceded the war. Thus, although trust in elected officials is often low, Sierra Leone's youth and wider population have a means by which to hold politicians to account and to voice their dissatisfaction. While in 1991 the RUF was able to present itself as the only means by which the people could remove an unjust government, no such appeal would hold sway in post-conflict Sierra Leone. Although ex-combatants of the RUF may view different governments as 'same car, different driver', they nevertheless value their ability to enact change through the ballot.²¹

Beyond the formal arena of party politics, young people also have access to a much broader range of associations and civil society organisations through which they can voice their concerns. Women's and youth groups have become a central feature of Sierra Leone's post-war landscape and continue to act as a check on the patrimonial elites that were implicated in pushing the country into conflict in 1991. Although there is concern over 'elite-capture' of these groups,²² and it is clear that party politics has increasingly dominated civil society in post-war Sierra Leone, they provide an alternative means by which frustrations that once fuelled violent conflict are now channelled peacefully.

Support for Sierra Leone's democratic institutions by the UK, regional partners and Sierra Leone's public has been a crucial element of post-conflict stability. Training and support to political parties, and mediation of political disputes and violent electoral incidents by the UN and donors, have played an important role in maintaining Sierra Leone's multi-party democracy. Civil society groups and the National Electoral Commission have proved essential to holding governments and parties to account during elections, and have helped build a degree of trust in the otherwise deeply distrusted political apparatus of the state.

It is also interesting to note that, while the peace that exists between former combatants of various factions and the wider community is a remarkable outcome, even the most optimistic of assessments cannot attribute this to the success of formal reconciliation and transitional justice mechanisms. Following the end of the conflict, the Special Court for Sierra Leone was established to try those who bore the greatest responsibility for war crimes. Although the Court tried and convicted Charles Taylor, its record was mixed at best and its impact within Sierra Leone considerably less than its

²¹ Mitton, 2013.

²² J. Boersch-Supan, (2013) 'The Generational Contract Influx: Intergenerational Tensions in Post-conflict Sierra Leone', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp.25–51.



impact externally. For instance, the Court's prosecution of Chief Sam Hinga Norman, former head of the CDF, proved highly unpopular with Sierra Leoneans in the south and east of the country who widely regarded him as a hero. Norman died in custody before he could stand trial. Likewise, Foday Sankoh died in custody before trial. Although the court successfully convicted Taylor, knowledge of the court's activities and support for it was still limited, not least as a result of concerns that money spent on the Court could have been much better spent on providing reparations and support to victims of the war.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Sierra Leone, which was often at odds with the Special Court during its proceedings, produced its final report in 2004. Providing a detailed history of the conflict that recognised the major root causes of war, it also recommended a programme of reparations for war-victims and a series of political reforms. However, the reparations programme was heavily delayed and ultimately inconsistently implemented. As with the DDR programme, this led to grievances among those who were excluded.

Therefore, both the Special Court and the TRC have been criticised for failing to address the needs of ordinary Sierra Leoneans.²³ However, the country appears to have achieved a degree of reconciliation despite these failures. Explanations for this outcome include the argument that Sierra Leone's tradition of healing does not revolve around criminal prosecution or truth-telling, but rather around community-centred rituals and a tradition of 'social forgetting' in which past-wrongs are consigned to history. Another related explanation is that reconciliation, as with reintegration, has been driven in Sierra Leone by a collective determination to move on from conflict and focus on the immediate concerns of basic welfare and development, a determination that stems in part from war-exhaustion. Taken together, the determination of ordinary Sierra Leoneans to reconcile – even if only equating to mutual tolerance, rather than forgiveness – and to focus on the prospects of development, are another key element in explaining Sierra Leone's successful transition from war to peace.

Finally, a major, but often overlooked, reason for the consolidation of peace in post-war Sierra Leone is the bitter experience of eleven years of war, shared by combatants and civilians alike. The successful dismantling of the RUF owes much to the common disillusionment of its rank-and-file who benefited little from their time in the rebel group, despite promises by its leaders that they would receive benefits such as free education upon the RUF's victory. Reconciliation in Sierra Leone has been strongly driven by a collective national will to put the destructive conflict in the past and focus on the pressing needs of basic, daily welfare. As such, despite considerable frustration over economic conditions and perceived political failures (including during the 2014 Ebola outbreak), determination never to return to the 'madness' of war remains strong.²⁴

The collective determination of Sierra Leoneans to avoid conflict is a key reason why persistent grievance over unemployment and exclusionary patrimonialism have not encouraged a return to violence. However, such determination cannot be relied upon indefinitely, and new generations of young Sierra Leoneans with no memory of conflict may not be similarly deterred.

²³ Kirsten Ainley, Rebekka Friedman & Chris Mahony (eds) *Evaluating Transitional Justice: Accountability and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone* (London: Palgrave Macmillan); Kieran Mitton, (2015b) 'A Pragmatic Pact: Reconciliation and Reintegration in Sierra Leone', in Kirsten Ainley, Rebekka Friedman & Chris Mahony (eds) *Evaluating Transitional Justice: Accountability and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone* (London: Palgrave Macmillan).

²⁴ Mitton 2013; Ucko 2016.



Bibliography

Ainley, Kirsten, Rebekka Friedman & Chris Mahony (eds) *Evaluating Transitional Justice: Accountability and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone* (London: Palgrave Macmillan).

Boersch-Supan, J. (2013) 'The Generational Contract Influx: Intergenerational Tensions in Post-conflict Sierra Leone', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp.25–51, 25.

Fanthorp, R. (2005) 'On the limits of liberal peace: Chiefs and democratic decentralization in post war Sierra Leone', *African Affairs*, 105(418):27-49.

Gberie, Lansana (2005) *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone* (London: C. Hurst & Co).

International Crisis Group (ICG) (2001), *Sierra Leone: Managing Uncertainty* (Freetown/ Brussels: ICG).

ICG (2003) *Sierra Leone: The State of Security and Governance* (Freetown/ Brussels: ICG)

Keen, D. (2005) *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey)

Mitton, Kieran (2015a) *Rebels in a Rotten State: Understanding Atrocity in Sierra Leone* (London: Hurst/Oxford University Press).

Mitton, Kieran (2015b) 'A Pragmatic Pact: Reconciliation and Reintegration in Sierra Leone', in Kirsten Ainley, Rebekka Friedman & Chris Mahony (eds) *Evaluating Transitional Justice: Accountability and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone* (London: Palgrave Macmillan).

Mitton, Kieran (2013) 'Where is the War? Explaining Peace in Sierra Leone', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 30, Issue 3.

Peters, Krijn (2011) *War and the Crisis of Youth in Sierra Leone* (Cambridge University Press).

Richards, P. (1996) *Fighting for the Rainforest- War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey).

Ucko, David H. (2016) '[Can Limited Intervention Work? Lessons from Britain's Success Story in Sierra Leone](#)', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 39, Issue 1.